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# President urged to rescue funds for Contra arms

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Given the grimmest assessment yet by his key advisers on Nicaragua, President Reagan has been urged to make a personal commitment to rescue military funding for the anti-Sandinista forces.

The president is now weighing the recommendations of the National Security Council, which predicted defeat for the Nicaraguan resistance within six months unless Congress provides full funding for the so-called Jackson Plan for Central America.

In effect, the NSC told Mr. Reagan that he would have to use the prestige of his office to exempt such funding from the strictures of the Gramm-Rudman Act.

The Friday NSC meeting, involving the administration's most senior officials, was the first of its kind in a year. One of the participants worried that the administration "was six months behind the power curve."

The atmosphere of the meeting, according to another administration official, was the most serious to date, indicating a major turning point had been reached in Nicaragua.

"The Sandinistas are bad and getting worse," the official said, pointing out that the last hope for constructing a democratic alternative to the present government would be lost unless Mr. Reagan makes a major, personal effort to save it.

The president was told that the resistance forces had grown from 10,000 to 21,000 men since U.S. military assistance was ended by Congress in May 1984, but that future growth depended on a renewal of military aid.

Mr. Reagan was also told that the Sandinistas were "scared" but determined to carry out a major military offensive against the resistance forces that would wipe them out before the end of the dry season beginning in June.

Senior congressional leaders were briefed after the Friday meeting and informed that the Sandinista

armed forces continued to receive massive Soviet military assistance. Moreover, they were told that Soviet involvement in the command and control of the Nicaraguan army was now deep and undeniable.

Cheap Soviet oil continues to flow into the country, and both Moscow and Havana are now purchasing up to 30 percent of Nicaragua's sugar exports at three times the world price.

One official who attended the meeting told The Washington Times that Soviet concern for the collapsing Nicaraguan economy had extended to sending a planeload of toys to Managua shortly before Christmas. Also, according to the Sandinistas, the Russians are thinking of buying up to 50 percent of the country's sugar exports.

Mr. Reagan was told that Cuban involvement in the Sandinista army had also increased sharply. Cuban

advisers are now with all the so-called battalion light infantry units bearing the brunt of the counter-insurgency effort. Up to 15 advisers are attached to each company, which gives them command and control of the Sandinista units down to squad level.

The president's advisers also said the Soviets are increasing their disinformation activities regarding Nicaragua. Their efforts include the planting of stories suggesting anti-Sandinista involvement in drug trafficking.

Mr. Reagan was further informed that Moscow was making a major, behind-the-scenes effort to "rehabilitate" Eden Pastora, a former Sandinista commander who broke with Managua and led a separatist effort against his former colleagues in southern Nicaragua.

The president was told that Managua had increased its repression since the Oct. 15 curbs on remaining freedoms in Nicaragua, placing special emphasis on suppressing the Catholic Church and its media.

The political organization sup-

porting the resistance, UNO, is still regarded as a viable alternative by the NSC, but Mr. Reagan was advised that the effort would falter unless increased resources were made available to it. The president was urged to give more visible support to UNO, which will soon publish a manifesto outlining its program — including land reform.

Mr. Reagan was also informed that while military assistance to the resistance was critical, it had to be part of a broader effort. In addition to the Contra funding program which has been stalled for 18 months on Capitol Hill, more economic and military aid must be provided to the "frontline states" — Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras — which have been subjected recently to increased intimidation from Nicaragua.

Particular stress was placed on rebuilding the Honduran air force, which is equipped with obsolete Super-Mystere fighters. Other recommendations included more training for the Costa Rican civil guard, and securing funds for coun-

terterrorist training for the region's police forces.

It was also recommended that the administration push its European allies harder for support of the democratic forces, and to urge them to end political and economic assistance to the Sandinistas.

Aside from recommending these specific programs, the president's advisers urged him to renew his efforts to get the entire Jackson Plan off the ground. The plan, which was named in honor of the late Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, was formulated by a special commission led by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. It envisioned spending up to \$8 billion on Central America in economic and military assistance over a five-year period.

Although funding has increased since the low point of early 1983, Congress has neither appropriated nor authorized anywhere near those amounts. In light of these difficulties, many of Mr. Reagan's advisers believe the president will have to make a "trip to the Hill" to save the plan.